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In the Matter of:

Wireline Competition Bureau Seeking Comments on E-rate Category Two) WC Docket No. 13-184

The Houston Area Library Automated Network (HALAN) is a consortium of eight public libraries serving urban and suburban communities in Southeast and Central Texas. Member libraries range from small, single-site institutions to multi-branch urban library systems.

HALAN is pleased to be able to provide input on the impact of having access to secure and sufficient funding for our libraries WiFi and internet connections. Before the E-rate Modernization in 2014, virtually no libraries received funds for then, Priority 2 services. Unless we were at a 90% discount rate, we could assume there would be no funding left after all requests for internet access were funded. USAC data shows that most libraries are eligible for a 70% discount or less, and per the American Library Association, many libraries stopped bothering to apply for WiFi funding. Some states have reported that none of their libraries have received WiFi funds since the beginning of the E-rate program.

In communities across the country, people turn to the library to use our WiFi on their tablets, laptops, and other devices. Library users are downloading job applications, applying for financial aid, seeking health information, and communicating with family. Community members also depend on library supplied WiFi to apply for disaster recovery assistance/services, as was the unfortunate lot for some flood victims in Southeast Texas in the wake of Hurricane Harvey. All these activities are dependent on a strong WiFi signal. Increasingly, libraries also provide services that depend on WiFi, like coding clubs for K12 youth. Libraries everywhere know WiFi throughout the library is not a "nice to have" – it's a core community service.

With the commitment of the FCC to ensure a library budget of \$2.30 (\$5.00 for a selected category of larger urban and suburban libraries) per square foot, libraries can finally upgrade outdated equipment or plan for new construction. They have confidence that desperately needed support will be there.

We urge you to maintain secure funding through the full five-year budget period as adopted during the 2014 Modernization. Our institutions and the communities they serve depend on that funding.

HALAN appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback to the Commission and looks forward to further engagement as the FCC continues its important work of ensuring a secure E-rate program for libraries and schools.